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### Review of "Creating Chinese Ethnicity: Subei People in Shanghai 1850-1980" by Emily Honig

Sharon A. Carstens

*Portland State University*, [carstesa@pdx.edu](mailto:carstesa@pdx.edu)

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year interregnum in the prestige of the top officialdom; a disjointed, still somewhat hostile but mildly improving view of private entrepreneurs; and surprisingly, a rise of professors and high-school teachers (as the exemplars of 'gentility') to the very top of the prestige ratings. To get at sexual interest, he went so far as to survey the stalls in three university mens-rooms and ten neighbourhood outhouses, and is able to confide, for whatever it's worth, that drawings of male and female genitalia abounded in the former, but that images of female breasts were non-existent.

This seat-of-the-pants creativity in data gathering is considerably offset by an obvious dearth of training in survey techniques when it comes to more standard survey topics. No demonstrable efforts were made to obtain unbiased survey samples; sample sizes in some cases were far too small to provide significant results; and his end-use of the data is rudimentary, with few attempts at even simple correlations. Jankowiak's work entirely lacks the methodological sophistication of Whyte and Parish's counterpart urban study.

But this shortfall is more than compensated by the energetic curiosity and alert eye that Jankowiak brought to his years of research. *Sex, Death, and Hierarchy in a Chinese City* penetrates the urban scene in ways that other writings of the past decade have not, and for this the book deserves full praise and a substantial readership.

Jonathan Unger  
Australian National University

*Creating Chinese Ethnicity: Subei People in Shanghai 1850-1980*, by Emily Honig. Yale University Press, New Haven, 1992. xv, 174 pp., list of maps, preface, notes, bibliography, index. US\$22.50 (hardcover).

Emily Honig's book focuses on the social construction and contested meanings of Subei native place identity in urban Shanghai. Honig argues that while previous studies of Chinese cities have noted the importance of native place ties, the meanings and consequences of such identities for understanding class structure, popular culture and social conflict in China have not been adequately explored. Drawing on current ethnicity theories from anthropology and comparing the Chinese situation with that of ethnic groups elsewhere, *Creating Chinese Ethnicity* offers an insightful examination into the ethnic dimensions of social differentiation and cultural cleavages in Shanghai society from the 1850s up to the 1980s.

Perhaps the most striking feature about Subei people is that in many respects they do not exist, except in the minds of certain segments of Shanghai's population. Despite the uniformity in social and cultural stereotypes ascribed to Jiangsu immigrants from north of the Yangzi river, Honig relates that the 'Subei' region has always been linguistically, economically and culturally diverse. There is, in fact, no agreement on exactly where the boundary lines for Subei people or their homeland ought to be drawn. As with immigrant groups elsewhere, Subei

identity was socially constructed only after settlement in Shanghai. In this case, it seems to have developed as a stigmatized category in the minds of the non-Subei Shanghai population, who considered the Jiangsu northerners poor, distasteful and crude.

Subei immigration to Shanghai coincided with the commercial and industrial expansion of the city as a treaty port beginning in the mid-nineteenth century. Fleeing poverty and flooding in their home villages to the north, and speaking a dialect which set them apart from Jiangnan immigrants, Subei settlers in Shanghai congregated in shack settlements that ringed the city, clustering in the lowest paid and lowest status occupations as rickshaw pullers, dock labourers, garbage collectors, barbers, and bath-house attendants. Immigrants from southern Jiangsu and northern Zhejiang dominated Chinese businesses and industry in Shanghai, and preferential hiring of new immigrants from one's native district continually reproduced these socio-economic divisions between Subei people and other Shanghai Chinese. Meanwhile, cultural ideals in the emerging Shanghai Chinese culture came to be defined in terms of Jiangnan language, food, clothing, and even opera styles, while the stereotypes for Subei people and culture in Shanghai became synonymous with low class.

Honig traces the evolution of these ethnic stereotypes over time, showing how particular events and circumstances both changed and highlighted prejudices against Subei people. For example, in the Japanese attack on Shanghai in 1932, Subei people were accused of collaboration with the Japanese. After 1949 a new set of Subei immigrants settled in Shanghai: Subei soldiers from the New Fourth Army who liberated the city were rewarded with government positions, creating a strong Subei component among the new political elite. Yet, despite these changes and an official policy which downplayed ethnicity and emphasized class, the negative stereotypes of Subei people flourished, bolstered in part by continued patterns of lower class residential and occupational concentrations among the children of Subei immigrants. In an interesting twist, Honig suggests that for some Shanghai people in the 1980s, Subei epithets represented a covert rebuke of both workers and Party officials who could not be more openly criticized.

The general theme of Honig's book, the significance of native place identities in the construction of urban Chinese social orders, makes a vital contribution to a more complicated and nuanced interpretation of Chinese urban life. As Honig notes, previous discussions of ethnicity in China studies have been limited to non-Han minority populations. While the ethnic dimensions of regional and dialect divisions have been more broadly recognized in studies of Han Chinese communities in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia, the social and cultural ramifications of such divisions have gone largely unexplored in mainland China. Although I do not agree with Honig that her focus on native place identity necessarily adds anything new to ethnicity theory, for the study of Chinese society it is a salutary move that is both remarkably late in coming and reveals much about the scholarly prejudices of Sinology.

This book builds on Honig's previous Shanghai research in both natural and revealing ways. Having failed to locate a clear class basis for social action in her previous book (*Sisters and Strangers: Women in the Shanghai Cotton Mills 1919-1949*), Honig has turned to ethnicity theory as an explanatory tool. Yet this too only takes her so far, in part because of the way she defines her subject. Much of the strength of ethnicity theory derives from its attention to the development of

ethnic consciousness as a locus of cultural definition and social action. Yet a positive ethnic consciousness in terms of the categories Honig explores seems to be the one element conspicuously lacking in Shanghai both among Subei people and among those who label them. Subei people themselves either hide from or deny this label. Meanwhile, an equivalent contrasting Jiangnan identity has also not emerged. Honig mentions in passing the possibility of more localized regional identities for immigrants from Wuxi, Ningbo, or Suzhou in Jiangnan as well as smaller regional sub-divisions within the Subei population. Perhaps further examination of these narrower native place identities could reveal more positive sources of identity beyond the largely negative stereotypes of Subei identity depicted in Honig's work. This in turn might also help explain why Subei people have retained linguistic and other cultural markers in a situation where their display appears to lead only to negative consequences.

But this is mere quibbling. *Creating Chinese Ethnicity* is an excellent book filled with fascinating information and interpretations which for the most part ring true. It reveals a side of Shanghai society not previously explored or appreciated, and it problematizes the construction and manipulation of native place identities in a manner which other scholars would do well to emulate.

Sharon A. Carstens  
Portland State University

*Chen Village under Mao and Deng*, by Anita Chan, Richard Madsen and Jonathan Unger. University of California Press, Berkeley, 1992. viii, 345 pp., acknowledgements, index. US\$40.00 (hardcover), US\$15.00 (paperback).

*Chen Village*, one of the most insightful and penetrating studies of village China written since the founding of the People's Republic, was acclaimed as an extraordinary scholarly achievement when it was first published nearly ten years ago. This new expanded and updated edition is even better than the original work.

The 1984 edition consisted of nine chapters and 284 pages of text. The focus was on the political life of a Guangdong village of approximately one thousand people in the period from spring 1964, when a group of fifty urban youngsters from Guangzhou went to settle down in the village, to early 1982, when an important phase of decollectivization was initiated. The portion of the original edition that deals with the time between February 1965 and May 1969 remains, ten years later, the best narrative history we have on politics in a single village during the Four Cleanups and the Cultural Revolution. While the material on the mid and late 1960s — the main concern of the book — was remarkably detailed, the treatment of the 1970s and early 1980s — a secondary concern — was confined to the final seventy pages or so. The overview material on the 1970s was wonderfully suggestive, in large part because the core material on the 1960s was so solid and thorough. Combined, the two parts of the 1984 edition showed convincingly that, despite the intensity and gravity of the mass political